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ABSTRACT

Principals' supervisory and evaluation practices are assessed in this study. Mailed questionnaires to all K-12 principals in a county within the Detroit metropolitan area yielded an overall 94 percent response rate. Principals were asked for numbers of total faculty, faculty observed, minutes of observation, types of data used to make judgments, types of observation instruments used, the purpose of observations, criteria used, types of decisions based on the data, and whether job descriptions were available. Findings indicate that supervisory deficiencies exist in job description, validity, and reliability, while at the same time principals express desire for teacher improvement. A paradox for principals is the discrepancy between accountability obligations, time, and teacher improvement. A list of guiding questions is offered for board of education members. Seven statistical tables are presented. (23 references) (LMI)

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Current Supervisory and Evaluation Practices: Paradoxes and Deficiencies

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Abstract

A survey was conducted of all principals at all levels in a suburban and rural county considered part of the greater metropolitan Detroit area to assess current supervisory and evaluation practices. The overall return rate on the mailed questionnaire was 94%. Principals were asked for numbers of total faculty, faculty observed, minutes of observation, types of data used to make judgements, types of observation instruments used, the purpose of observations, criteria used, types of decisions based upon the data, and whether job descriptions were available. Responses are presented. An analysis of the responses is presented using other studies and the Personnel Evaluation Standards. Questions are posed for board of educaton members.

Current Supervisory and Evaluation Practices: Paradoxes and Deficiencies

Influenced by scientific management and business, some claim that supervision was fashioned after an inspection and production model that was concerned with efficiency and meeting production goals as set by administration (Tanner and Tanner, 1987; Bostwick, 1986). In a 1945 ASCD survey five supervisory practices were considered to be most promising: democratic leadership, group conferences, workshops, community relationships, and individual conferences (Bostwick, 1986). Starting in the 1950's clinical supervision , modeled after medical school practices, was promoted as the appropriate educational supervisory practice (Conant, 1963; Goldhammer, 1969; Goldhammer, Anderson, and Krajewski, 1980). In the 1980's additional models have been proposed in an effort to find a more effective method. Examples include developmental supervision (Tanner and Tanner, 1987) and peer coaching (Chrisco, 1989; Karant, 1989; Raney and Robbins, 1989; Anastos and Ancowitz, 1987; Sparks and Bruder, 1987; Kline, 1987; Gibble and Lawrence, 1987; Glatthorn, 1987; Gray and Gray, 1985). Tanner and Tanner (1987) argue that this shift from evaluation to

supervision is an evolution of the fault-finding inspectional model to the developmental model.

Charters (1918) said that an administrator's primary function is to provide everything that improves instruction. Supervisory leadership has been defined as the process of helping teachers to find the best possible methods to improve teaching and learning (Tanner and Tanner, 1987). There have been two barriers to fulfilling this goal for supervision. The first is the lack of any past research that shows a relationship between supervision and student achievement (Squires, Huitt, and Segars, 1983). An ERIC search of documents from 1976 to 1989 produced four studies using three descriptors: supervisory methods, teacher effectiveness, and student achievement. One study dealt with a business college and the other three were summaries of process-product research. A study conducted in South Carolina of the PET model (Hunter's teacher effectiveness model), found a positive relationship between math achievement and coaching when the coaching was done by a principal and PET trainer or when coaching was done by a person who was perceived as being "Hi-Skill" (Mandeville and Rivers, 1989). The second major barrier to supervision

has been underlying assumptions about teaching and the teacher evaluation process which are in opposition: the scientific mode and the artistic mode (Sergiovanni and Starratt, 1983).

Survey

A survey was conducted of all K-12 principals in a suburban and rural county considered part of the greater metropolitan Detroit area to assess supervisory and evaluation practices in use. The return for the mailed questionnaire was 94% overall with a 89% return for elementary principals, 100% for intermediate principals, and 100% for high school principals. Principals were asked for numbers of total faculty, faculty observed, length of observation, types of data used to make judgements, types of observation instruments used, the purpose of observations, criteria used, types of decisions based upon the data, and whether job descriptions were available.

Findings

Total numbers of faculty members in surveyed schools ranged from 7 to 72.2 full time equivalents. Table 1 presents a list of responses for numbers of faculty members and minutes of faculty supervision by level. There was little fluctuation in percentages of

faculties supervised between levels. The average response at the intermediate level for minutes of supervision was almost half of that at the elementary level.

Insert Table 1 about here

Principals were asked what types of data was used to make judgments during supervision. Responses are listed in rank order in Table 2. 65% of all respondents reported using observations, lesson plans, the environment, complaints, and out-of-class behaviors to make judgments. Ranking and percentages were similar for all levels. While an examination of Table 2 shows a wide variety of data used, less than 8% of principals at all levels used the following types of data: artifact analysis, student data or grades, test scores, testimonials, and retentions.

Insert Table 2 about here.

Principals were asked what kind of observation instrument was used. Responses by level are listed in Table 3. A majority of principals (52%) responded that

they used a contractual form. Principals were asked to return a copy of the form used. Several forms returned showed differing forms used within the same district despite responding that a contractual form was used.

Insert Table 3 about here.

The model that was used to ask principals what their purpose was for observation was based on Tanner and Tanner's (1987) categories of Contrasting Models of Supervision: inspection, production, clinical, and developmental. Given Tanner and Tanner's definition of these models, 59% said that the purpose of their supervision was administrative monitoring for accountability; improvement of efficiency; maintenance of "standards;" and conformance to preordained segmental goals, contract, or policy requirements. The second highest response (22%) was for a clinical supervision model which was defined as supervision for instructional improvement and enhancement of teacher-pupil interaction in the classroom. Production supervision received the third highest response (10%) and was defined as supervision for accountability, improvement of efficiency, raising "standards" as

indicated by test scores, and performance by segmental objectives and goals. Receiving the least responses was developmental supervision (9%) which was defined as supervision for educational improvement and curriculum improvement. As is noted in Table 4, the ranking of the purposes for supervision was similar for each level.

Insert Table 4 about here

Choices for criteria for making judgments about the quantity or quality of teaching included experience, the presence of certain behaviors, research, and models of teaching. Table 5 presents a ranking of responses for criteria used for supervisory judgments. When the responses are examined by level the only exception to the ranking was at the high school level where high school principals ranked experience above the presence of certain behaviors. Table 5 presents the responses on criteria used by level.

Insert Table 5 about here.

Principals were asked what was the major decision made based upon the data collected. Choices included decisions about employment, the curriculum, teacher improvement and staff development, and school improvement. Responses indicate that the majority of decisions are for teacher improvement and staff development (59%). Of note was the response at the intermediate level. No intermediate principal responded that data was used to make decisions about the curriculum. Responses on supervisory decisions are listed in rank order by level in Table 6.

Insert Table 6 about here.

Principals were asked whether they had a job description for teachers. 66% of respondents said they did not. The response by level that a job description was not present was 72% for elementary principals, 70% for intermediate principals, and 43% for high school principals. In most school districts principals differed with each other as to whether a job description existed.

Discussion

If the findings of this survey are accurate, the responses indicate that about two-thirds of faculties are supervised for about two class periods. When principals' responses that supervision decisions were for teacher improvement is compared to research on staff development showing effective change to be dependent on multiple inservice opportunities (Sparks, 1983), a paradox arises: a desire for teacher improvement and a lack of time for effective change.

In a survey of parents, they ranked initiating improvements in teaching techniques and methods as the most important duty and responsibility for a principal (Drake, 1978). However, in another study of principals' role perception, 50% responded that evaluating teachers was a hindrance to their role perception (Roe and Drake, 1980). While principals ranked instructional supervision as their number one ideal duty, they also ranked it in the middle of 10 duties of how they actually spent their time (Krajewski, 1978). The paradox between role expectation and reality is evident in this survey. While 59% of all principals responded that the purpose of supervision was administrative monitoring for

accountability and efficiency, 59% also responded that the major decisions in supervision were for teacher improvement and staff development.

To further analyze this survey data the Personnel Evaluation Standards (The Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, 1988), hereafter referred to with standard numbers (e.g. A1), will be applied to determine if the responses show that current supervisory practices meet those standards. The Personnel Evaluation Standards is a collaborative effort by such organizations as the National School Boards Association, National Education Association, American Association of School Administrators, and all the major principal associations to set nationally recognized criteria and guidelines for assessing and improving their systems for evaluating educators. In some cases, questions did not obtain a response to make an analysis of certain standards. A summary of this analysis is presented in Table 7.

Insert Table 7 about here

The responses indicate that many standards do appear to be addressed. This is primarily due to the

majority of principals responding that a contractual form was being used. A contractual form implies that formal, contractual guidelines have been set (P2), that from these guidelines contractual procedures are set forth (A3), and that uses are defined by contract (U2). A formalized, contractual relationship between supervisor and employee may meet the criteria for the standard for conflict of interest (P3) and involvement of parties for political viability (F2). All contractual forms returned contained sections to record contextual variables which may meet the standard for work environment (A2). The response regarding data and data collection indicate a tendency to collect multiple assessments of instruction to help validate (A4) the procedure. Yet the lack of responses for collection of certain types of data and the relatively high rank of complaints and out-of-class behavior raises doubts.

Deficiencies in supervision are implied from various survey responses when compared to personnel standards. The perception of a lack of a job description by almost two-thirds of principals indicate a deficiency to meet the accuracy standards for defined role (A1), the propriety standard to promote "...effective performance of job responsibilities

(P1,p.21)," and the standard for valid measurement (A4) since a job description would be the basis to establish face, or content, validity. A minimal response on the use of research and established models of teaching also indicate deficiencies to promote effective performance (P1) and to meet the standard for valid measurement (A4). The paradox between administrative monitoring (accountability and efficiency) and teacher improvement raises doubt as to whether the standard for constructive orientation (U1) to develop human resources is being met. While no survey question specifically addressed reliability (A5), all school districts returned copies of their contractual forms. All forms contained rating scales with no justification for ranking. One wonders how a supervisor justifies the difference between "superior" and "satisfactory" poise. This doubt as to whether the reliability standard is being met is compounded by different forms returned within a district and by the minimal use of research and teaching models.

"Supervision as inspection is treated in the general literature as an artifact of the past- a function that is no longer tenable or prevalent in the contemporary education scene (Tanner and Tanner, 1987,

p. 170)." Based upon the findings of this survey, there appears to be many aspects of the inspection model that remain: accountability, use of experience, contractual forms, and use of experience over research to promote efficiency.

If the findings of this study are accurate there remain deficiencies in supervision in terms of job description, validity, and reliability while there is a desire in supervision for teacher improvement and effectiveness. If teachers feel that supervision is for accountability, will this affect the perception and climate surrounding supervision? McFaul and Cooper (1984) found in their case study that these kinds of environmental factors subvert the purpose of clinical supervision. Given time restraints and contractual obligations, can principals fulfill their desire for teacher improvement in the current school organizational pattern or should more consideration be given to restructuring movements like peer coaching to increase time for supervision? Research seems to indicate that a more cooperative and collegial approach can result in greater productivity, expertise, self-esteem, and staff cohesion (Johnson and Johnson, 1987). This survey indicates that a paradox between

accountability obligations, time, and teacher improvement exists for principals.

Questions for Board Members

The following are some questions that Board of Education members may wish to ask themselves given the findings of this survey:

1. Does policy exist regarding supervision and does it meet the criteria of the Personnel Evaluation Standards?
2. Does a job description exist in your district that incorporates effective teaching practices?
3. What is the history of supervision in your district? How many teachers are observed, for how long, and using what kinds of data?
4. What alternatives are available to your district to provide reliable and valid feedback for teacher and school improvement? Is peer coaching realistic?
5. What are the role expectations in your district for principals? Where is the emphasis?

One of the keys for the Deming method being so succesful in Japan and in such companies as Ford Motor Company has been the data feedback that has allowed

workers to make improvements. Valid and reliable supervision of educators may do the same for education.

Table 1

Numbers and Minutes of Faculty Supervision by Level

	Supervised			Minutes	
Level	n	Mean	% of total	Total	Mean
Elementary	361	15.04	66%	3025	126.04
Intermediate	188.5	18.85	65%	640	64
High School	280	28.15	70%	865	96.11
Total	829.5	28.15	67%	4530	105.3

Table 2

Rank Order of Data or Data Collection for Supervision for Total Sample

Data or Data Collection	% of responses
Observation	17%
Lesson Plans	15%
Environment	13%
Complaints	10%
Out-of-class behaviors	10%
Artifact analysis	8%
Student data/grades	7%
Test results	5%
Testimonials	5%
Retentions	2%

Table 3

Types of Observation Instruments Used by Level

Level	Contractual		Anecdotal		Structured		Other	
	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean	n	Mean
Elem.	19	61%	9	29%	3	10%	0	0%
Inter.	6	40%	5	33%	4	27%	0	0%
H.S.	5	42%	3	25%	4	33%	0	0%
Total	30	52%	17	29%	11	19%	0	0%

Table 4

Purposes of Supervision by Level

Level	Admin. Monitoring		Clinical Supervision		Production		Develop-mental	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Elem.	18	55%	9	27%	3	9%	3	9%
Inter.	8	62%	2	15%	2	15%	1	7%
H.S.	9	69%	2	15%	1	8%	1	8%
Total	35	59%	13	22%	6	10%	5	8%

Table 5

Supervisory Criteria Used for Judgements

Level	Behaviors		Models of Teaching		Experience		Research	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Elem.	20	29%	20	29%	17	25%	11	16%
Inter.	10	42%	7	29%	5	21%	2	8%
H.S.	6	32%	4	21%	7	37%	2	11%
Total	36	32%	31	28%	29	26%	15	14%

Table 6

Decisions Based Upon Supervisory Data

Level	Teacher Improv.		School Improv.		Employment		Curriculum	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Elem.	22	63%	7	20%	4	11%	2	6%
Inter.	10	67%	3	20%	2	13%	0	0%
H.S.	8	44%	4	22%	3	17%	3	17%
Total	40	59%	14	24%	9	13%	5	7%

Table 7

Analysis of Supervision Responses Using Personnel Evaluation Standards

Standard	Description	Comment
	Standards Not Addressed	
P4	Access to Personnel Evaluation Reports	Data Not Available
P5	Interactions with Evaluators	
U3	Evaluator Credibility	
U4	Functional Reporting	
F1	Practical Procedures	
F3	Fiscal Viability	
	Indication of Standard Being Met	
P2	Formal Evaluation Guidelines	Majority use contractual forms.
P3	Conflicts of Interest	Contractual form implies: relationship and interaction,
A3 & U2	Documentation of Procedures, Defined Uses	contractual procedures,
F2	Political Viability	involvement of parties.
A2	Work Environment	All forms provide section to record contextual variable

A4	Valid Measurement	Some indication of assessment of instruction.
	Indication of Standard Not Being Met	
P1	Service Orientation	Lack of job description, little use of research.
A1	Defined Role	
U1	Constructive Orientation	Dichotomy between admin. monitoring and purpose for teacher improvement.
A4	Valid Measurement	Lack of job description, minimal use of research & models of teaching.
A5	Reliable Measurement	Scaled rating forms with no justification for scales. Differing forms and methods used within district Minimal use of research & models of teaching.

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